

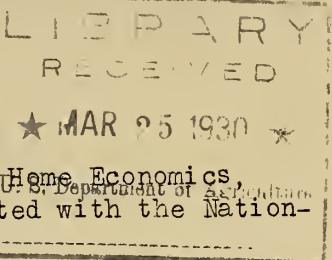
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COOKING SPRING VEGETABLES



A radio talk by Mrs. Fanny Walker Yeatman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through Station WRC and 35 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, March 21, 1930.

How do you do, Home Makers?

Spring, to many people, means pleasure out of doors. To others, spring means new beauty in trees and flowers. Some of us, though, have to be more practical, and spring to us means a greater abundance of fresh vegetables that add to health and give variety to the menu.

It goes almost without saying that one of the things that attracts all of us to spring vegetables is their fresh green color. "How can I cook greens and keep them green?" is a question that comes to us over and over again.

The secret of cooking green leaf vegetables so that they are green when they come onto the table, is just this. At least so we have found in our experiments here in the Bureau of Home Economics. Cook green leafy vegetables just as short a time as possible, and cook them in an open kettle, is the first rule.

For the sake of flavor and minerals, use only a small quantity of water, and have it lightly salted and boiling briskly when you drop the vegetables in. Sometimes, there is enough water clinging to the leaves of freshly washed spinach or other greens to start them cooking. The less water you use in cooking vegetables, the more food value you save. Some of the iron and calcium is bound to be dissolved in the liquid, and if you must pour it off, then these valuable food substances go with it down the drainpipe.

For the sake of color and vitamins, cook green vegetables until they are tender and no more. Most leafy vegetables are tender enough to chop after 15 minutes of cooking. Long, slow cooking tends to destroy the vitamins in green vegetables. And as for color, whenever you see olive-drab greens come onto a table, you can be almost certain that they have been cooked for a long time in a closed kettle.

"Doesn't a pinch of soda in the water help to keep the green color in vegetables?", is another question we are often asked. Yes, it does, but we do not recommend it because soda too has an injurious effect on the vitamins in foods. If vegetables are cooked quickly, they will keep their fresh green color without resorting to the use of soda.

Another point in cooking spring greens. Have you tried combining different kinds to give a blend of flavors? Many people who find the flavor of dandelions alone a little too suggestive of a tonic, enjoy it combined with spinach. Another blend of mild and pungent flavors is beet greens and turnip greens. Still another that appeals to many is corn salad and mustard greens cooked together. Just how much to use of each kind depends entirely on your own taste. Try different combinations and soon you will hit on one that the family will call for as regularly as spring comes around.

(over)



The seasonings for greens can be varied too. Bacon fried crisp, broken into small pieces, and served on top of the chopped greens is always good. A little of the bacon fat may be mixed in to give added richness and flavor. Or use delicately browned cubes of salt pork in the same way. Browned butter gives an even more delicious flavor than plain melted butter. And best of all to some tastes are olive oil and lemon juice or vinegar.

One of the hotels here in Washington has a way of cooking spinach and seasoning it with cream, which has become quite famous. The manager herself took me into the kitchen one day and let me watch the chef. Here is the recipe I brought back. After the spinach is washed and drained, chop it fine. Then cook the chopped spinach in its own juice, in an uncovered pan of course, for 10 minutes. Drain, and add some thick cream, and salt and pepper to season. "Special Spinach," it is called on the menu. When you try it, I think you too will agree, it is special spinach.

Fresh asparagus still remains the most spring-like of all vegetables to many. All that I've said about quick cooking in an uncovered kettle, in a small quantity of water, applies to asparagus too. Some persons like the stalks left whole, so they can be served in a neat pile on buttered toast with melted butter over all. Others prefer asparagus cut up before cooking and seasoned with cream or rich milk slightly thickened. Hollandaise sauce, made with egg yolks, butter, and lemon juice, is another most delicious accompaniment for asparagus.

Peas are another green vegetable made delectable or otherwise by the cooking. I have found that peas cook tender more quickly when simmered in a small quantity of lightly salted water than if allowed to boil. They keep their fresh green color better too, and they aren't so likely to pop open their skins and become mushy. Try simmering green peas, the next time, and I think you'll agree that fresh peas should never be allowed to boil.

